

Peacebuilding Commission

Ambassadorial-level meeting on Timor-Leste *Sharing Experiences, Good Practices and Lessons Learned in the Context of South-South and Triangular Cooperation*

Chair's Summary

1. On 26 September 2022, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Timor-Leste for the first time. The purpose of the meeting was to hear good practices and lessons learned from Timor-Leste's experience in its peacebuilding process, from the Government, civil society and international and regional partners, in the spirit of South-South and triangular cooperation, and to utilize the Commission platform to mobilize international support for the country's efforts to work through its remaining challenges, particularly in the areas of economic development and women and youth empowerment. The Commission was briefed by the President of Timor-Leste, the former President and Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, a representative of the Asian Development Bank, and two civil society representatives from Timor-Leste. The General Secretary of the Group of Seven Plus (g7+), the Resident Coordinator in Timor-Leste and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs also made remarks.

2. In his opening remarks, the Chair of the PBC recalled the progress made by Timor-Leste in achieving its peacebuilding priorities, including facilitating reconciliation and institution-building, laying the foundation for civil society participation and prioritizing participation of women and youth. He underscored the important role played by Timor-Leste, particularly through the g7+, in supporting other conflict-affected countries, by sharing its experience and helping international and regional partners to improve their engagements and coordination. Encouraged by the commitment of Timor-Leste to engage with the Peacebuilding Commission and share its experience with the wider international community, he stressed that the meeting offered an opportunity not only to learn from Timor-Leste, but also to identify the areas where further support can be provided.

3. H.E. Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of Timor-Leste, expressed his deep appreciation to the UN system and the international community for supporting the country's peacebuilding effort. He emphasized the critical role of quality leadership, represented by H.E. Mr. Xanana Gusmão, in Timor-Leste's peacebuilding process, noting that this leadership was based on authority deriving from credibility and legitimacy emanated from the people of Timor Leste. He underlined that, under quality and committed leadership, Timor-Leste took a multi-track approach to reconciliation in which the country did not only focus on national reconciliation, but also on reconciliation at the international level, especially with Indonesia, based on the strong will to heal wounds and extend the hand of friendship to each other. He emphasized the country was able to move forward and go through a peaceful transition through this multi-track reconciliation process. Without quality leadership on the ground, international support would not have succeeded, he emphasized. He recognized the role of United Nations, especially the contributions of the UN peacekeeping operations in fortifying peace and stability in Timor Leste. He also underscored the importance of political will and long-term commitment of the

international community, especially Member States of the United Nations, to provide the necessary support for countries emerging from conflict based on the needs of these countries.

4. H.E. Mr. Xanana Gusmão, former President and Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, also expressed his gratitude for the UN system's support for Timor-Leste's democratic transition. Recalling Timor-Leste's experience in state-building, he noted that addressing injustice and building an effective justice sector were particularly challenging, however, he welcomed the important participation of civil society and the private sector in the country's peacebuilding process. He further emphasized that the g7+ is a well-suited platform for South-South cooperation, which facilitates exchanging of good practices and lessons learned regarding peacebuilding and reconciliation. Based on his experience in engaging with the member countries of the g7+, he identified the lack of political will to engage in dialogue and reconciliation as a common obstacle to sustaining peace. He encouraged the Peacebuilding Commission to further exercise its convening power to bring together different groups and facilitate dialogue in support of conflict-affected countries, especially the member countries of the g7+. He also encouraged more involvement of the PBC in peacekeeping settings. In concluding, stressing the need to take a context-specific approach, he emphasized the importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding.

5. Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, recalled that the United Nations had accompanied Timor-Leste's path to independence and democratic consolidation, including by deploying four major UN missions with two parallel UN-approved military coalitions from 1999 to 2012. He noted that Timor-Leste has made tremendous progress, with a strong commitment to peace, reconciliation, and inclusion. Whilst welcoming Timor-Leste's commitment to the 2030 Agenda, he stressed the importance of continued efforts to promote decentralization, build institutional resilience and strengthen the justice sector to enhance rule of law and accountability. He underscored the importance of providing quality education, healthcare, training, as well as job creation, in order to promote youth participation in peacebuilding. Investments in poverty reduction should remain a priority, he noted. He emphasized that vulnerable and marginalized people, including people from rural communities, and persons with disabilities, must remain at the centre of sustainable development and noted efforts to enhance women's meaningful participation in public affairs as a priority. Emphasizing the importance to ensure sound economic diversification, he stressed the need for Timor-Leste to urgently diversify its income base and increase non-oil growth. He emphasized that managing natural resources and natural disasters, as well as enhancing resilience to the impacts of climate change is critical for furthering long-term peace and development in Timor Leste.

6. Ms. Lesley Bearman Lahm, Representative, North American Representative Office, Asian Development Bank (ADB), noted that ADB's approach to working in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) and small island development states (SIDS) is evolving, and its experience in working with Timor-Leste is helping ADB develop and implement innovative approaches. She noted that the new Country Partnership Strategy in Timor-Leste, covering 2023 to 2027, aims at accelerating the country's development and promote climate change mitigation and economic diversification, including supporting resilient infrastructure. Emphasizing the important role played by infrastructure in peacebuilding, she noted that ADB is supporting essential infrastructure and services and committed \$619 million in public sector loans, grants and technical assistance to Timor-Leste since 2002. She outlined ADB's current support to the country, including improving urban water, upgrading the main international airport, and modernizing power distribution, as well as additional support for addressing the

COVID-19 pandemic and 2021 cyclone. She also shared that ADB is integrating climate and disaster risk analysis at early stage of the project cycle to understand risks to project performance and encourage adaptation and the creation of measures to mitigate these risks.

7. Mr. Néilson Belo, founder and executive director of Fundasaun Mahein, shared his organization's efforts in support of peacebuilding and the promotion of human rights in Timor-Leste. He underscored the important role played by Fundasaun Mahein in the monitoring of the security sector, and in encouraging international support and engaging in advocacy regarding police reforms, defence policy, and border management. Expressing his concern over groups of young men and women who engage in violence in Timor-Leste, he noted that his organization identified lack of police presence and the rule of law and lack of education and economic opportunities as root causes of violence among youth and encouraged the Government to address them. He also highlighted the important work of civil society in South-South and triangular cooperation, by describing Fundasaun Mahein's experiences in sharing advocacy strategies with other civil society organizations in Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa. He emphasized that while direct large-scale investment in the security sector has been critical, small-scale investments into civil society organizations like Fundasaun Mahein has been vital to leverage dialogue and prevent conflict. Stressing that that peace is built not only by the State but also through the work of civil society organizations across the country, he called for long-term support for civil society organizations.

8. Ms. Maria Fatima Sara dos Reis Afonso, representative of Belun, noted that women and youth are contributing in important ways to conflict prevention in Timor-Leste, including through working towards prevention of gender-based violence, creating opportunities for women and youth to participate in peacebuilding, and coordinating local mediation processes. She emphasized that the Government, in collaboration with civil society, has made progress to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security and the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence. Despite progress, she noted the patriarchal system continues to be an obstacle in addressing inequalities and discrimination that affect women's access to opportunities and benefits, including land and property, and that gender-based violence persists. She stressed the need to ensure that existing laws, such as land laws and laws against domestic violence, are implemented and enforced at all levels of society, especially in rural communities. She made four recommendations going forward: (1) improve women and youth's empowerment and their access to knowledge and skills that are essential for them to become peacebuilding actors; (2) create inclusive opportunities for youth and vulnerable groups and strengthen their access to quality education; (3) maintain commitment to balanced support of both Government institutions and civil society organization initiatives; and (4) strengthen partnership between the Government and UN system.

9. Mr. Hélder da Costa, General Secretary of the g7+, emphasized that experiences from Timor-Leste and other g7+ countries provide valuable lessons that should inspire reforms in the way peacebuilding and state-building is conducted, recalling that sharing of these lessons is one of the core pillars of the g7+. He stressed the need to put dialogue and reconciliation at the heart of peacebuilding efforts, with a focus on healing and bridging divisions. Underscoring the critical importance of national ownership and leadership, with the interests of the people at the center, he encouraged the UN and other multinational organizations to listen to national leaders and citizens of the country, comprehend their perspective and historical trajectory and be flexible and adaptive. Emphasizing the potential of peer learning among conflict-affected

countries, he shared the g7+'s experiences in facilitating South-South cooperation in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. He expressed the g7+'s readiness in forging partnership with the UN bodies, including the PBC, and sharing experiences of the member countries of the g7+.

10. Mr. Roy Trivedy, UN Resident Coordinator in Timor-Leste, commended the significant progress made by Timor-Leste, and underscored the importance of context specific solutions and national leadership for peacebuilding as well as political will to engage in dialogue and national reconciliation. Stressing the vital roles played by civil society organizations, media and the private sector, he noted that these important actors are encouraged to contribute to peace and development in the country. Emphasizing the significant roles the international community can play in support of peacebuilding and long-term development in Timor-Leste, he underscored the importance of international support and investment in education, health, water and sanitation, as well as employment opportunities for young people.

11. Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, recognized opportunities to advance South-South and triangular cooperation in support of peacebuilding, and commended the role played by the Government of Timor-Leste in the g7+. Highlighting the important role the PBC could play as a platform for peer-to-peer learning and exchange of good practices and lessons learned, she encouraged the Commission to strengthen this role. Underscoring the importance to provide an inclusive platform for dialogue and national reconciliation, she noted that the Commission is strengthening its engagement with civil society organizations and women peacebuilders. She expressed PBSO's readiness to provide further support to Timor-Leste, including through the Peacebuilding Fund.

12. Member States and other partners welcomed the briefings and made the following observations.

- They welcomed the first-time engagement of the PBC with Timor-Leste and commended the remarkable progress made by Timor-Leste, through a nationally owned and led process, including in consolidation of peace and democracy, promotion of social cohesion and strengthening of institutions. They underscored the importance of dialogue and national reconciliations.
- They recognized the significance of support provided by international and regional partners, including the United Nations, in support of peacebuilding in Timor-Leste. They reaffirmed that there is no "one-size fits all" solution to peacebuilding and stressed the need to take a context-specific approach.
- They stressed the indispensable roles played by civil society organizations in peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, including through effort in addressing gender inequality and discrimination against women, empowering women and youth, and supporting the security and justice sector. They called for increased support for these actors.
- They also praised the leadership role played by Timor-Leste to improve international engagement and coordination in support of conflict-affected countries and regions. They emphasized that the Government's cooperation with regional and international partners, particularly as a founding member of the g7+ and its host country,

demonstrated its commitment to supporting peacebuilding in other conflict affected countries through South-South and triangular cooperation.

- They recognized the challenges and opportunities facing Timor-Leste, including reducing poverty and inequality, diversifying the economy, continuing to empower women and youth and addressing the adverse effects of climate change. They welcomed the efforts made by Timor-Leste, including through the adoption and implementation of a Strategic Development Plan, the 2017 SDGs Roadmap and the 2016 National Action Plan for the implementation of the Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). They expressed their commitment to support in mobilizing coherent and coordinated international support for Timor-Leste to address its remaining challenges and meet its peacebuilding priorities, through the PBC platform.
- They acknowledged the role South-South and triangular cooperation can play in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. They recognized the Commission as an important platform for facilitation of South-South and triangular cooperation in support of peacebuilding, including through exchanges of good practices and lessons learned. They expressed their commitment to advance the role of the Commission in this regard, building on the successful engagement with Timor-Leste.
- They recognized that this meeting presented a unique opportunity to encourage other conflict-affected countries, including other member countries of the g7+, to engage with the Commission.

13. In response to comments from the floor, Mr. Gusmão conveyed his gratitude to the PBC for its engagement with Timor-Leste, and called on the Commission to also support other conflict-affected countries, especially the member countries of the g7+, including through facilitating dialogue and reconciliation. ASG Spehar suggested exploring how the UN Peacebuilding Architecture could further support both Government and civil society organizations in their peacebuilding efforts in Timor-Leste and enhancing the role of the PBC in peer-to-peer learning among conflict-affected countries. She also encouraged other conflict-affected countries to benefit from the PBC's support, including through communicating the added value and showcasing the work of the PBC. Ms. Lahm emphasized the critical role of inclusive development and underscored the importance of improving engagement of women and youth, including through facilitating learning among conflict-affected countries to develop capacity in programme management, governance and institution-building.

14. The Chair thanked the briefers and the Member States for their remarks and expressed commitment to continue PBC's support Timor-Leste in its peacebuilding efforts. He also stressed that good practices and lessons learned from Timor-Leste's experiences can inform other conflict-affected countries and regions to advance sustainable development and peace through strong political commitment and investment in institution building and reconciliation. He stated that the meeting on Timor Leste was an important step in realizing the Commission's intent to expand the PBC's work in diverse geographical setting, as articulated in its Programme of Work. In conclusion he expressed PBC's commitment to further enhance opportunities for countries to engage with PBC in line with the principle of national ownership.